

Facets

F O R W O M E N

MAY 2005

Survival

Donna Rizzo on coming back from a near-deadly car accident

**Financial
spring cleaning**

**Learn the signs
of skin cancer**

**Bonding
through food**



Notes from the Newsroom

By Rebecca A. Petersen
Staff Writer

Spring is here. The warm sunshine, greening grass, time in the garden and playtime outside with the kids is payback for that hour of sleep we lost a few weeks ago to daylight-saving time.

Spring is considered by many to be a time for physical and psychological cleansing.

Clearing out the leftovers from fall foliage reveals a soil rich for planting. The extra hour of daylight lets us dust off our

walking shoes for an end-of-the day stress reliever and mind clearer.

In this issue of Facets, we give you a few ideas to make this a productive spring.

Debra Atkinson encourages us to get up, outside and moving. Two parts exercise and two parts sunshine equal a recipe for emotional well-being.

Iowa State University Horticulturalist Richard Jauron gives us a lesson on forsythias, shrubs that burst with bright, yellow color this time of year.

Charles Love, our resident skin expert, will teach us how to keep ourselves safe

from the sun. He also teaches us how to keep an eye out for skin cancer.

And finally, we introduce you to Donna Rizzo, a well-known Ames veterinarian, who is back to work after a devastating car accident last year. Rizzo spent last spring in intensive care, healing. This spring, Rizzo continues to heal, but with a new purpose. Rizzo's experience can teach us that we can't wait around for a season to take stock of our life.

Use this time of year as a springboard to take your physical and emotional stock. ♦

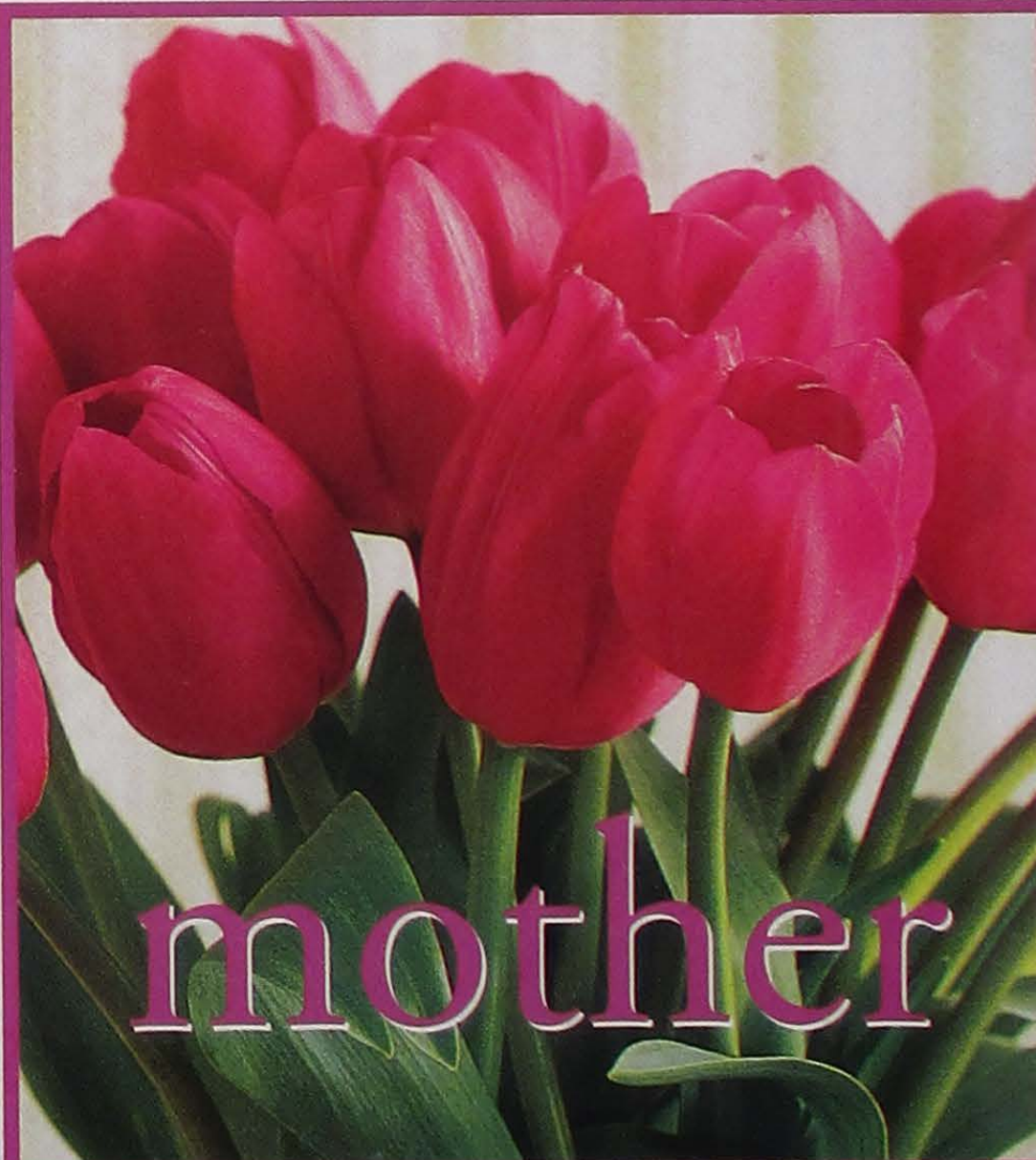
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Facet > 1. One of the flat surfaces cut on a gemstone.

2. The particular angle from which something is considered.

FACETS IS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE TRIBUNE

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Do You Have Skin

By Charles W. Love

By the time you read this, it will be almost May; time for spring flowers, lawn mowing, and plenty of fun outdoor activities. May is also National Skin Cancer Awareness Month.

Each year, thousands of skin-care specialists donate their time to do public skin cancer screening. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, there are an estimated 1 million new cases of skin cancer diagnosed each year in the United States. In this article, you will learn about the three most common types of skin cancers and how to tell if you have one.

Skin cancer is by far the most common of all cancers.

Nearly half of all cancers in the United States are cancers of the skin. It is estimated that there will be 7,600 deaths from melanoma and 2,200 deaths from non-melanoma skin cancers this year.

There are three major types of skin cancer, basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma.

Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC)

Basal cell carcinomas are the most common of skin cancers, accounting for 80 percent of all skin cancers. BCCs are found most commonly on sun-damaged skin, especially on the face. They range in appearance from a red patch to a flesh-colored, pearly, bleeding non-heal-

ing sore. BCCs are not at risk for spreading internally (metastasis). However, if they are neglected, they can be very destructive.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)

Squamous cell carcinomas account for 16 percent of all skin cancers. They are thick nodules often with a scale. They are less likely to bleed than BCCs. SCCs, like BCCs, are commonly found in sun-exposed, facial locations. However, they are more aggressive and likely to spread internally, usually to the nearby lymph nodes.

Melanoma

Melanoma is the least

common, but most dangerous, of the three common types of skin cancer. Melanomas account for only 4 percent of all skin cancers, but are responsible for the majority of deaths from skin cancer.

Melanomas can be found on any part of the body. It is most common in people who have a history of blistering sunburn from childhood, several irregular moles or a family history of melanoma. The ABCD's of melanoma detection stand for dark spots that are: asymmetric, irregularly bordered, black in color and a diameter larger than a pencil eraser.

Any change in size, shape, color, elevation, or symptom is suspicious, and should be evaluated by a skin-care specialist.



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Cancer?



How to Protect Yourself From Skin Cancer

There are some important steps to take in the prevention of skin cancer. First and most important, is to avoid excess sun or tanning-bed exposure. Sunscreens, proper protective clothing and hats provide the best long-term protection from skin cancer. Removal of abnormal moles might prevent the development of melanoma. Treatment of precancers is helpful in preventing more serious surgery for invasive cancers.

Treatment of Skin Cancer

There are several surgical treatments available for skin cancer, but there is only one that has the success rate that I demand for my patients. Mohs' surgery is the most sophisticated method for the

treatment of non-melanoma skin cancers. There are two factors that make it the treatment of choice. Mohs' surgery has the highest cure rate of any treatment ever developed for skin cancer. It also has the tendency to spare as much normal skin as possible.

Now that you know more about skin cancer, perhaps it is time to get your skin-cancer screening this month. For more information on an upcoming free screening call 232-8844, or go to the American Academy of Dermatology web site at www.aad.org and the American College of Mohs Surgery at www.mohscollege.org. ♦

Charles W. Love is the medical director of Radiant Complexions Dermatology Clinic in Ames.

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~ May is ~ High Blood Pressure Awareness Month

Many Americans have high blood pressure and may be unaware of it that is why it is also known as the "silent killer." Blood pressure is defined as the force of blood against the walls of your arteries. As your blood pressure increases it causes your arteries to narrow and force the heart to work harder in order for blood to properly distribute blood to the body.

The American Heart Association recommends:

- Normal blood pressure level: less than 120/80.
- Prehypertension: 120-139/80-89
- Hypertension: 140/90 or higher

It is very important to have it checked regularly (at least once a year), especially if it runs in the family. If high blood pressure is untreated it can increase your risks of heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease, and impotence. It is best to take care of it as soon as possible in order to prevent the risk factors.

The American Heart Association recommends the maximum sodium intake of 2400 mg per day for adults with normal blood pressure. It is not uncommon for many of us to double this amount in our daily diet.. Limit high sodium foods such as soups, cheeses, processed foods, fast food, sauerkraut, pizza, chips, pretzels, saltines, salted popcorn, salty or smoked meats and fish, salted nuts, olives, bacon, peanut butter, catsup, sauces, dressings, and others. About 1/3 of our salt intake comes from the salt shaker. Sodium compounds are found in our foods and medications. These compounds are sodium bicarbonate, monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium ascorbate, sodi-

um nitrite, and sodium citrate. Sodium bicarbonate is found in many antacids that contain about 270 mg of sodium per gram. Be a label reader and look for low sodium foods. A low sodium food is defined as 140 mg of sodium or less.

Simple Steps to Follow to Watch your Sodium Intake

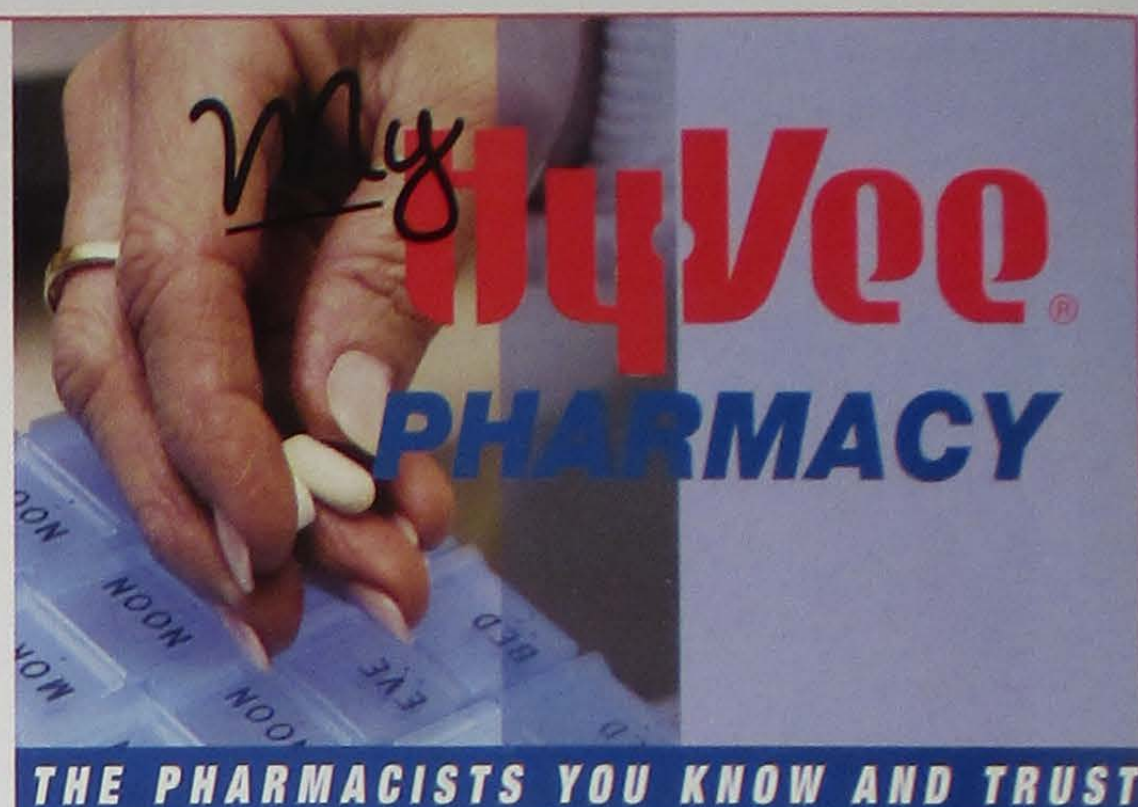
- Avoid the salt shaker. Also avoid high sodium foods such as cheese, soups, chips, and various processed foods.
- Make your own food at home. Use low sodium broth for soups. Incorporate spices to add some flavor to your food.
- Exercise daily to help decrease your blood pressure level
- Relax and relieve your stresses. Treat yourself to some alone time.
- Quit smoking, if you smoke, or limit your amount.
- Limit your alcohol intake. Excess alcohol intake cause up to 20% of hypertension in America.
- Weight loss can help decrease your blood pressure
- Weigh yourself daily if you suffer from high blood pressure. An usual increase in weight within a day is unsafe, resulting in excess fluid in your body.
- Try incorporating some high potassium foods to balance out your sodium intake. Foods high in potassium include cantaloupe, yogurt, raisins, orange juice, potatoes, and many others.



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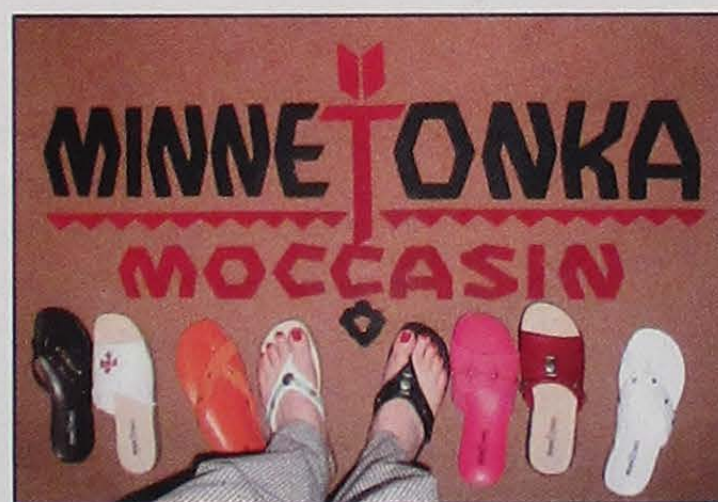
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Get Financially Organized!

By Sara Gatchel

Items to keep in your safe deposit box:

- Automobile titles
- Birth certificates
- Stock and bond certificates
- Certificates of deposit
- Citizenship & naturalization papers
- Copy of financial notebook
- Death certificates
- Education degrees
- Heirlooms
- IRA papers
- Legal agreements
- Marriage documents
- Military discharge papers
- Property bills of sale
- Property deeds
- Personal property appraisals
- Personal property inventory & pictures

Items to keep in a fireproof box at home:

- Income tax returns (last three years)
- Insurance policies
- Living will
- Power of attorney
- Durable medical power of attorney
- Property tax receipts
- Trust documents
- Warranties
- Wills

Items to keep with an attorney, relative or friend:

- Burial instructions
- Copy of financial notebook
- Living will (copy)
- Power of attorney (copy)
- Durable medical power of attorney (copy)
- Trust documents (copy)
- Wills (copy)

With a little time and careful consideration, you can achieve financial organization. ♦

Sara Gatchel is a public relations and marketing specialist for the Greater Iowa Credit Union in Ames.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, organize means to arrange so that the aggregate works as a unit, with each element having a proper function.

Life is busy, and families are constantly trying to find order and keep everything organized. As the stress of everyday life is upon us, it also is necessary to maintain financial order within the aggregate.

Take an inventory of where you are financially. Look at your financial plan to make sure it is still in line with your current goals. There are several different topics to consider when evaluating your financial situation.

Think about where you are, and where you want to be financially. Then think about how to get there.

Saving and investing money is very important, even if it is difficult. An emergency fund is most important, and regular contributions into a savings plan or invest-

ment option should also be considered.

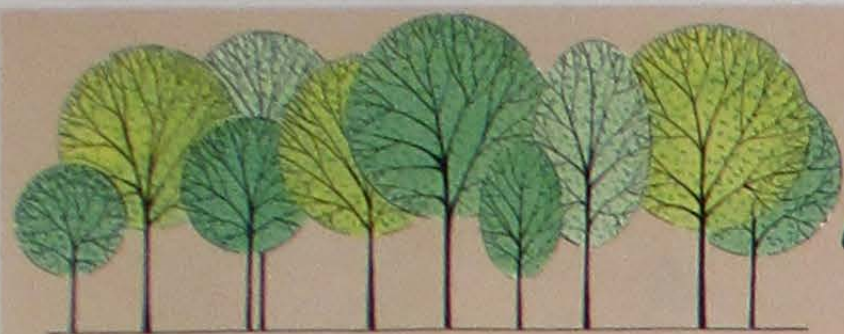
When you are financially comfortable, you will have enough money saved to allow for control, options and choices in your life.

Eliminating debt is a resolution for many. Think about a plan to knock out existing debt. Maybe you can cut certain expenses or cancel some credit cards. Set spending limits for yourself, and create a budget.

Look at your current loan situation. Should you refinance or consolidate?

Evaluate your insurance options. Remember to shop around for the best rate every year. In addition to life, health, home, vehicle and disability insurance, don't forget about long-term care insurance. Today's statistics indicate that one in two people will need long-term care.

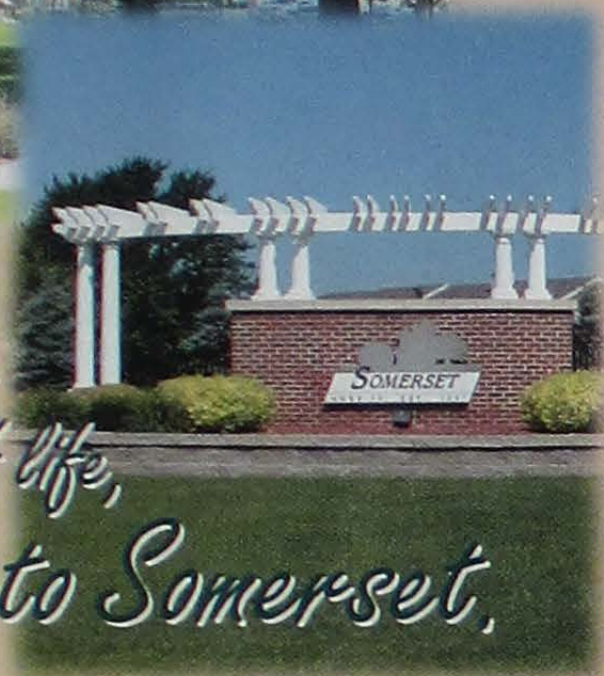
Get your important documents and items organized. Following is a suggested list of what to keep where.



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Forsythias

Bright, Yellow Harbingers of Spring

By Richard Jauron

After a long, drab winter, most gardeners anxiously await the arrival of spring. One sure sign that spring has truly arrived is the bright yellow flowers of the forsythia.

Named after William Forsyth, an 18th century Scottish horticulturist, the forsythia is a deciduous shrub that is native to China, Korea and Europe.

In Iowa, forsythias typically bloom in early to mid-April. The four-petaled flowers vary from light yellow to bright golden yellow and persist for 10 to 14 days. Flowers are produced in groups or clusters along the stems. Forsythias bloom only on old wood.

Leaves emerge shortly after flowering. Forsythia leaves are medium to dark green in summer. Fall leaf color is usually poor. Occasionally, however, leaves may turn pale yellow to reddish purple in the fall. Forsythias are one of

the last deciduous shrubs to drop their leaves in the fall. In Iowa, leaf drop typically occurs in late October or early November.

Forsythias are fast-growing shrubs. Many cultivars (varieties) have spreading, arching growth habits and can reach heights of 8 to 10 feet.

Forsythias grow and bloom best in full sun. They will grow in partial shade, but won't bloom as heavily. Forsythias adapt to a wide range of soils.

However, they do not perform well in wet, poorly drained sites. Forsythias do not have serious insect or disease pests.

The forsythia is an excellent plant for mixed-shrub borders. It can also be massed on sunny slopes, or used as an informal hedge. Low-growing cultivars can be used as ground-covers.

When selecting forsythia, choose a cultivar that reliably blooms in Iowa. The flower buds on some cultivars in Iowa are



not reliably cold hardy. For example, the flower buds on 'Lynwood Gold' and 'Spring Glory' are hardy to minus 10 degrees Fahrenheit.

Since most parts of Iowa experience winter temperatures below minus 10 degrees Fahrenheit, these cultivars often don't bloom well in the state.

An excellent forsythia for Iowa is 'Meadowlark.' Jointly introduced by North Dakota State and South Dakota State

Universities, in collaboration with the Arnold Arboretum, 'Meadowlark' will bloom after exposure to temperatures down to minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit.

Flowers are bright yellow. 'Meadowlark' is a vigorous, rapidly growing shrub. Its height and width are 8 to 10 feet. 'Meadowlark' has a spreading, arching form.

'Northern Sun' is another good choice for the upper Midwest.

Introduced by the University of Minnesota, 'Northern Sun' will flower after temperatures drop to minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit. The spreading, arching shrub grows 8 to 10 feet tall and has a similar spread. Flowers are yellow-gold.

Introduced by Iowa State University, 'Sunrise' is an excellent cultivar for southern and central Iowa. Its flower buds are hardy to minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Plants are covered with masses of small, medium-yellow flowers in early spring. 'Sunrise' is a semi-spreading, compact shrub with a mature height and width of 5 feet. Its compact size makes 'Sunrise' ideal for small hedges or shrub borders.

Other forsythia culti-

vars that bloom well in Iowa include 'Northern Gold,' 'New Hampshire Gold' and 'Vermont Sun.'

While most forsythia cultivars are grown for their attractive, yellow flowers, a few are grown for other features. 'Bronxensis' is a low-growing cultivar that is often used as a groundcover. Plants commonly grow 18 to 24 inches tall. Unless covered by snow, 'Bronxensis' doesn't usually bloom well in Iowa, as its flower buds are hardy to minus 10 degrees Fahrenheit.

Gold Tide is another low-growing forsythia. The compact, spreading plant grows 2 to 3 feet tall. Its flower buds are hardy to minus 15 degrees Fahrenheit. Gold Tide is commonly used as a

groundcover and foundation planting.

'Fiesta' is a compact shrub with variegated foliage. Plants typically grow 3 to 4 feet tall. Leaves are green with yellow centers.

Forsythias are easy to grow, but do require some maintenance. Pruning is the most important chore. Proper pruning produces a healthy, vigorous, heavily blooming shrub. Since they bloom on old wood, forsythias should be pruned immediately after flowering. Pruning the shrubs from mid-summer to late winter will drastically reduce flowering in spring.

When pruning mature forsythias, it's best to remove one-fourth to one-third of the oldest (largest) stems at ground level every

other year. New shoots will emerge from the ground and bloom in following years.

Old, neglected forsythias can be rejuvenated by pruning them back to within 3 to 4 inches of the ground in late winter or early spring. The rejuvenated shrubs will grow back quickly and should begin blooming again in one or two years.

Some shrubs provide multi-season interest with attractive flowers, fruits or foliage. While the forsythia is rather one-dimensional, its yellow flowers are a beautiful, welcome sight in the spring landscape. ♦

Richard Jauron is a horticulture specialist at Iowa State University Extension.



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Life Renewed

One Woman's Story of Survival



Ames Veterinarian Donna Rizzo is pictured with her golden retriever, Bella, in a photo taken at her clinic in April.

By Rebecca A. Petersen

When Story County Sheriff Capt. Gary

Foster arrived on the scene of an accident last year, the longtime law enforcement officer was sure that the driver would die.

Donna Rizzo, a well-known Ames veterinarian, had ejected from her Chevrolet minivan through the windshield. Driving northbound to work on U.S. Highway 69 at about 8 a.m., she swerved to miss a vehicle turning left. The van fishtailed on the gravel shoulder, rolled several times and ended up on its top.

"Witnesses said she flew out of the vehicle, was high in the air and landed

on the pavement," Foster said. "She had what I thought to be grave injuries."

Had Rizzo's beloved golden retriever Copy not flown through the windshield first, Foster's assessment would be right.

Medics airlifted her to Mercy Medical Center in Des Moines. She lived on a respirator and in a coma for three weeks.

She had a broken nose and wrist, fractured cheekbones and a detached ear. The accident also aggravated her arthritis. Rizzo was in intensive care for more than a month. She transferred to a rehab center, where she stayed for several months. From the rehab center, she moved in with her parents.

One year later, Rizzo is back in her own home and

back to practicing animal medicine.

She lives with a new purpose that came with a cost.

Copy saved her life, she said. And losing an animal that she considered a child motivated her to push through the injuries and get back to the examining table.

"There are times I feel he gave his life to save me," she said.

The physical scars will fade. Donna's mother, Joyce Rizzo, knows her determination will not.

"She's a fighter, and she's not going to stay down. She's going to be back. Nobody's going to keep her from coming back."

◆◆◆

Rizzo graduated from Iowa State University's

veterinary medicine program in 1989. Against the urging of her professors, she left academia for private practice. Shortly after graduation, she purchased the Ames Pet Medical Clinic on South Duff Avenue.

She grew her life and the practice around a love of animals. She didn't get married. She didn't have children. She adopted dogs from animal shelters and grew her canine family.

"To me, my dogs are my family," Rizzo said. "I would spend every last dollar I have to take care of them."

After nearly tripling the clinic's size, Rizzo now holds a patient base of 3,000 animals.

"I feel like I run this practice as a pet family," she said.

After the accident, Rizzo's biological family learned that this daughter and sister had stretched her human family as well. Clients sent more than 300 cards of well wishes. Area veterinarians donated time to see

Rizzo's patients.

The support overwhelmed Donna's parents.

"It was just unbelievable the support we have had from people," Joyce Rizzo said. "We can't thank them enough."



Rizzo re-joined her practice in January on a part-time basis and hopes to be full-time as soon as she has the strength. She sees patients in the afternoons, but she is not cleared to perform surgeries. Aaron Lehmkuhl, who was hired after Rizzo's accident last May, continues as a full-time veterinarian.

Joyce Rizzo says her daughter's personality changed after the accident, which doctors say is normal. The woman who once was easygoing and kept to herself is no longer afraid to share her opinions, good or bad. Donna admits that she's not as patient as before.

She remembers little about the accident or the events of the past year.



Madison, one of the two office cats at the Pet Medical Center of Ames, strolls up out of the basement to take a look around.

Doctors say her short-term memory will come back in the next year. Her veterinary knowledge, however, is still sharp.

The wound from losing Copy still aches. But she heals by sharing her love of animals.

Rizzo's become an advocate for securing animals in automobiles. Copy's sister, Bella, also was in the car during the accident. She lived because she was in a cage.

Rizzo also is back to her appearances on WOI's "Talk of Iowa," giving callers advice about their animals.

"She has this wonderful ability to connect with pet owners ... to empathize with them," said Talk of Iowa's Host Katherine Perkins. "You always feel like she understands what you're going through, whether it's worry or exasperation." ◆



Bella takes a break but keeps an eye on the front office from her usual spot under the gate leading to the front desk.

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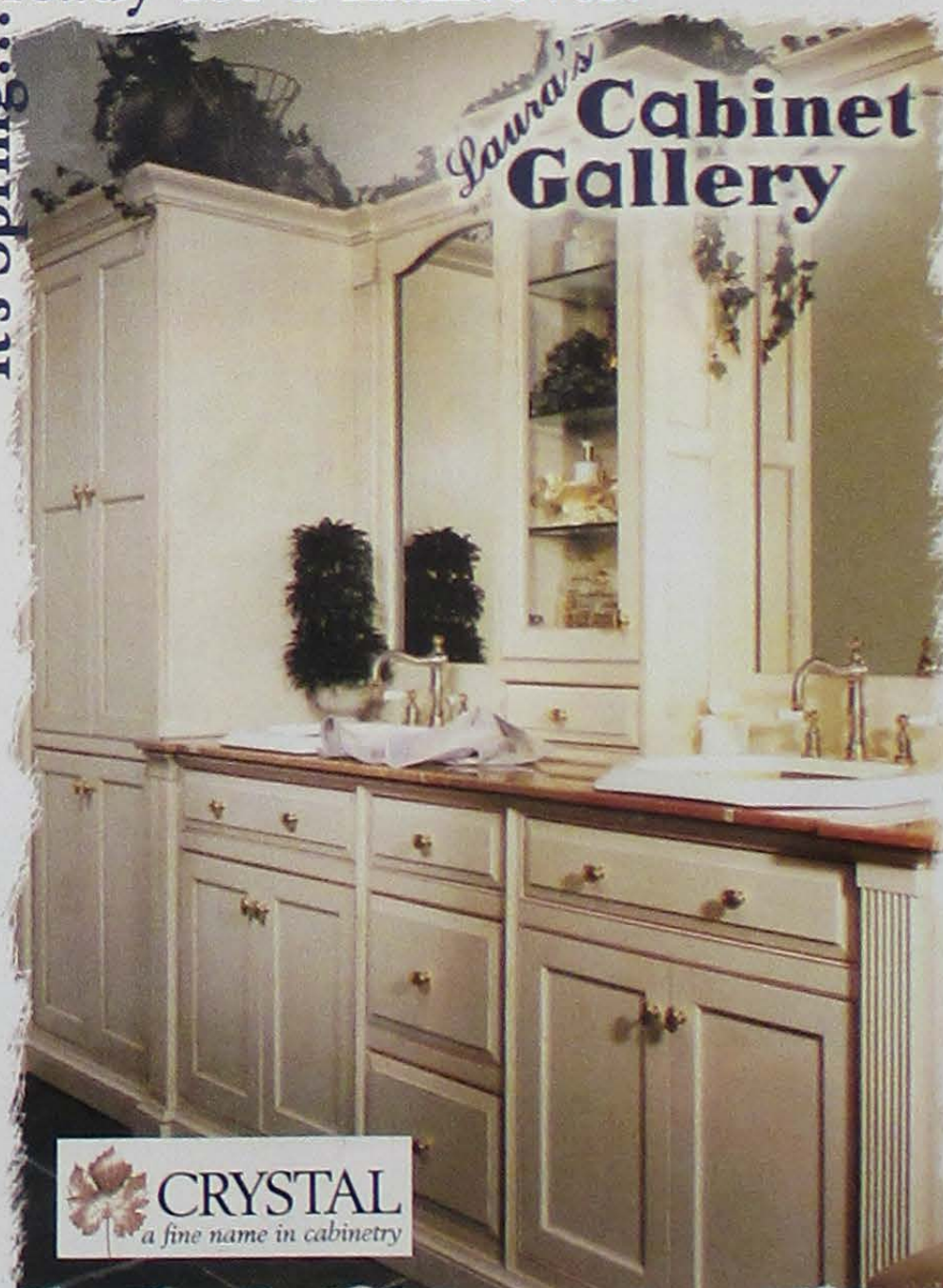
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Singing the Blues?

Get Out, Get Moving, Get Well!

By Debra Atkinson

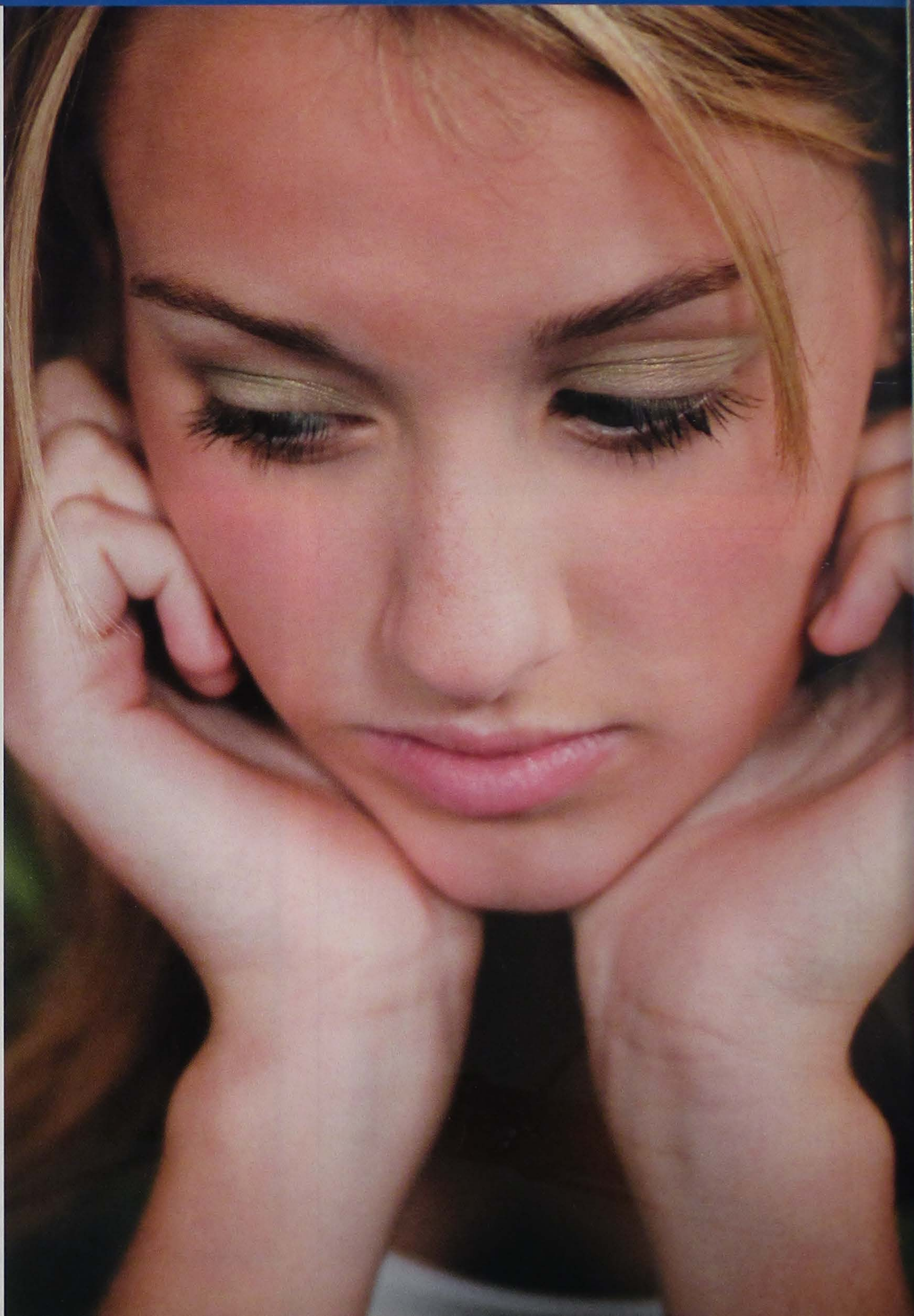
How depressing is this? The Wellmark Report shows the rate of antidepressant use in Iowa is 136 per 1,000 members, compared to the national rate of 107 per 1,000 individuals insured.

More alarming to Story County residents is that Ames has the highest rate (175 per 1,000) of antidepressant use in Iowa, reports Sheila Riggs, Ames resident and vice president at Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of Iowa.

Antidepressants work by affecting brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. There are three neurotransmitters associated with depression: serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine. There are also three types of antidepressants for treating depression. The most popular of these are the Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs). They are popular because they have the fewest side effects. SSRIs work by increasing the brain's serotonin levels. Serotonin is the chemical responsible for moods and emotions.

Natural sources of serotonin include exposure to sunlight and exercise. Both of these, in addition to dietary changes and existing support systems, are lifestyle factors considered in the treatment of depression by Diane Cardwell, a registered nurse and physician's assistant at McFarland Clinic.

Cardwell is a strong advocate of first making lifestyle changes to help depression. She uses a multifaceted approach to



treat her patients suffering from depression. Following a close look at the influence of lifestyle issues, Cardwell says there are a couple of determining factors on whether antidepressants are appropriate.

Look at what causes the depression. Is there a light at the end of the tunnel? How much are the symptoms affecting a person's ability to function on a daily basis?

Cardwell partially attributes the high rate of antidepressant use in Mid-Iowa to the high rate of professional women who want and need their lives put in order quickly, and believe medication is the solution.

You and Serotonin

If you find you are "solar powered," your mood brightens and productivity peaks on a sunny day. You know the benefits of serotonin provided by sunlight.

You may not have experienced the full blown effects of Seasonal Affective Disorder last winter, but realize that longer days and more sunlight have you full of energy. For some though, lack of sunlight and the serotonin it provides, can actually be debilitating, more a matter of getting to work today or not.

Exercise has also long been associated with higher levels of serotonin. Exercising aerobically, or in the target heart rate zone is Cardwell's activity prescription. Lower levels of exertion don't have as great an effect on mood and depression.

Cardwell reminds that the 60-minute daily dose recommended can come from multiple sessions throughout the day. In a recent study, researchers at the Copper Institute and University

of Texas Southwestern Medical Center found that participants who exercised even 30 minutes per day, three to five times per week, reported a 50 percent reduction in their symptoms of depression. The benefits were considered comparable to those achieved with medications or therapy.

Support also is a key in winning the depression battle. Making meaningful connections with people at home, work or in a social context can completely change the situation you're in and your thinking.

Connecting these dots, it's not so hard to see the prescription for depression may not be filled best by your pharmacist in the end. It may be a long run, walk, spin or rollerblading around Ada Hayden Heritage Park with a friend or running group (sunglasses and SPF lotion in tow).

It may be a session with a supportive trainer making sure that you are getting the intensity level that you need to serve you best. Participate in any one of the upcoming walks, runs or rides for a good cause and figure that your mental and physical health is another good cause.

Warning! This type of medication comes with side effects. Frequent users experience weight loss or control, improved muscle tone, improved skin tone (aka healthy glow), increased metabolism, enhanced self-esteem and confidence, less absenteeism and overall greater satisfaction with life. Be prepared to enjoy them. ♦

Debra Atkinson is a senior lecturer in Iowa State University's department of health and human performance and is a personal trainer at Ames Racquet and Fitness.

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What exactly is the Wellmark Report?

The Wellmark Report, since 1999, offers comparisons of annual health care trends and utilization in Iowa and South Dakota, pinpointing communities in both states with the highest and lowest prevalence or utilization.

Soy

good for you!



By Frances Wilke

Soy products have finally made the long journey from the fields of Iowa to the shelves of our grocery stores to become a mainstream edible these days. How do I know? My children eat it, and they are notoriously picky eaters. I must confess, they don't always know they are eating it.

Need more proof? Let me tell you about some farmer friends of mine. These fellows grow soybeans for a living, yet had never eaten it. At harvest time, they may pick one pod, put the contents in their mouth to check on the maturity of the crop, but promptly spit it out.

Just for fun, I brought a pound of steamed Edamame to the country bar we frequent, and encouraged them to try it with their beer. Edamame is simply the pods of soy steamed or boiled, and salted with the shell on. Pop them from their little furry casing into your mouth. They are a common appetizer in sushi bars.

They thought it was weird, after all it wasn't fried, and fried chicken gizzards were more appealing to eat while they drank. I found it ironic, that this bag of beans had come from Taiwan, and that I was feeding it to a bunch of Iowa farmers who have spent their entire lives growing it.

They did say that they saw the potential for value added agriculture.

Want to love soy? Let us count the ways: soy sauce, soy milk, soy ice cream, three different textures of tofu from soft, firm and extra firm, organic or not. Take your pick. Need more choices? Give the food scientists a little more time, and I promise you will eat it in one form or another whether you want to or not.

The easiest way to indulge is soymilk. The taste is so plain that marketers have loaded it up with chocolate, vanilla and strawberry, along with enough sugar to please a regular cola drinker. Plain and unsweetened can be found.

I drink it for a reason, the key word being isoflavones, which is one of those nutritional terms that I look for at this middle-age stage of my life. If it helps keep my hormones in check, I'm happy to continue the experiment. Here are a few ways to ease into a good habit.





Soy Smoothie

- 1 banana, peeled and frozen
- 4 frozen strawberries
- 1/2 cup of orange or pineapple juice
- 1 cup soy milk

Place ingredients in blender and pulse until smooth.

Tofu Stir Fry

- 1 tablespoon peanut oil
- 1 lb. pkg. extra firm style tofu, rinsed, cubed and drained in a strainer
- 1 lb. assorted fresh vegetables cleaned and cut
- 1 tsp of cornstarch
- 1 tsp of cold water
- 1/2 cup of teriyaki sauce

On medium-high heat, add oil and tofu to the frying pan and cook for about 5 minutes until slightly brown. Add vegetables and teriyaki sauce and cook for 2 minutes. Dissolve cornstarch in water and stir into the liquid until slightly thickened.

For those folks short on time, White Wave Baked Tofu is a great way to eat your soy. There are four servings in a vacuum-sealed pack and flavored with different sauces. It can be added to a cold salad or thrown into a stir fry. It is a very tasty and versatile product and got high praise from Jennifer Adkisson, Tribune copy editor and resident vegetarian. ♦

Frances Wilke, of Ames, is the former editor of Facets and a self-proclaimed "Food Diva."

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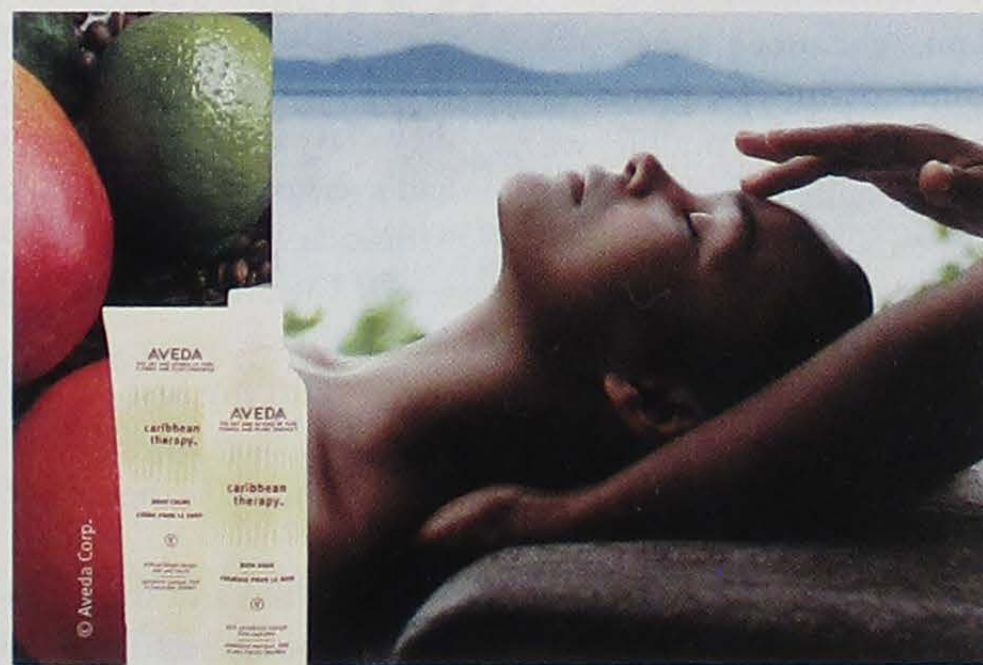
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Mothers, Daughters, Bonding & Food

By Kristen Browning-Blas
The Denver Post

When she was 4 or 5, Christiane Northrup remembers hearing her mother describe her as an "M-A-C-K truck," and the women's health visionary spent the next 40 years coming to terms with that body image.

The author of "Mother-Daughter Wisdom: Creating a Legacy of Personal and Emotional Health" (Bantam, \$28) was all over public television last month promoting her powerful new book.

Northrup is an obstetrician/gynecologist who wrote the best sellers "Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom" and "The Wisdom of Menopause: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing During the Change."

In "Mother-Daughter Wisdom," she uses a house metaphor to illustrate developmental changes: "At midlife, we ascend the stairs to begin work on the second floor of our lives ... total rebirth and rejuvenation of body, mind and spirit."

We met for tea to discuss the mother-daughter-food bond.

Q: I related to this book on so many levels. I have an 11-year-old daughter, and when I read it, I thought, "Man, I screwed up so much already."

A: Oh no, no, no, no. I really want it to be more comforting than scary. First of all, the daughter's individuality and soul is so strong. I talked to one mother who said, "My daughter was so strong when she was born that I

really think that all I needed to do was feed her. There wasn't a thing I could have done to change her — she just needed to be fed."

Some daughters are like that. Most of them are. So you can't really mess them up. All you have to do is work on yourself and be the happiest you can be. That's all you need to do.

Q: So how does what Mom eats influence her baby?

A: Our bodies are formed by our mothers' food. Food is the mother's environment, her relationships, the quality of the physical food. In ancient China, they used to have "tranquility schools" for pregnant women where they had the most beautiful environment because they knew it imprinted in the baby.

It actually begins in utero because you are her food. Let's get down to primal. When you become pregnant, your child influences your appetite. And every child is different. Mothers who have five kids will tell you they craved different foods or had aversions to different foods with each child.

Q: I wanted fish and chips. And Arby's.

A: With my first daughter I needed to have Lipton's instant tomato soup. I've never had that again.

The child and the mother are in a symbiotic relationship from the beginning. It's not just about you and it's not just about her, it's about the space between the two of them.

Q: A metaphor for the placenta?

A: That's exactly what it is. It's that dance all the time and you're gonna have things you like

that your daughter doesn't like, and vice versa.

The big myth in our culture is that the mother is supposed to always make it all right for the kid, supposed to make the foods they like, create the environment they like. When is it our turn to have what we like?

Q: So one way of modeling self-care is making food we like for ourselves? But that's hard to put in action.

A: I don't think most mothers, including myself, could articulate what we liked until we were in our mid-40s, until perimenopause, what I call "heading for the stairs."

When you're heading for the stairs, that's adolescence in reverse, when you refine what you're all about. And for a lot of women, you don't remember what that was about.

Q: I felt like I was in a fog when the kids were little. I remember saying life will be clear again someday.

A: I call it the hormonal veil.

Q: This book was right on time for me. Do women often tell you that?

A: This feels like my most important piece of work. I'm at a place with my youngest about to graduate from college — the kid on the cover here — I'm at this totally new threshold. So this book is birthed at the same time she is really going out on her own.

Q: Do you feel like you have to be a paragon, or have you truly lived this?

A: I did live it. I lived it, but I never articulated it. I always did this stuff instinctively. But there are things I didn't do, and people have said, "It's so helpful to hear

your mistakes, because it makes it easier for me to be human." Nobody gets it perfect — ever. Your job is to stand fast in yourself.

The idea of what nourishes us deeply — I've really spent a lifetime thinking about this, starting as little Mack truck here (pointing to the book). Eating well matters because every calorie that goes in has to count. So if I'm going to have a piece of bread, it better be the best bread.

I found a diary that I kept on a college trip through Europe, and I wrote down everything I ate. I was taking in the world through my mouth. We're born that way — kids put everything in their mouths, and as adults we still do that, but we pretend that we don't.

I've really learned that the key for me, to weight control, but also for pleasure and happiness, is taking time. I eat my biggest meal at lunch and take a long time doing it, and generally I go out. Because I want to be served.

The only way to get genuine, sustainable pleasure — just like sustainable farming involves replenishing the soil — is to replenish your own soil through slowing down and appreciating. Otherwise, you get into addiction where you need more and more of the same stimulus to give you the same bang, and that leads to illness and complete lack of responsibility for yourself and everyone else.

Just think what we could do if we were to bring all the power of our consciousness to the pleasure and responsibility of feeding ourselves well. ♦



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hue & cry

Definition: Any loud clamor or protest intended to incite others to action.

Women's voices too quiet in the op-ed chorus

By Heidi Marttila-Losure

In the past two months, women have made headlines with their lack of bylines on the nation's opinion pages.

The dustup started in March, when columnist Susan Estrich started a nasty e-mail exchange with Michael Kinsey, editorial page editor of the Los Angeles Times, over a dearth of women's voices on the page he oversees. In the following weeks, many prominent female and male columnists piped up on the topic.

The debate attracted attention partly because of Estrich's below-the-belt name-calling — she called Kinsey a jerk and a fool, and even suggested his Parkinson's disease had addled his brain. But people also focused on three bigger questions: Is it a problem that women are under-represented on the nation's op-ed pages? If so, why are they missing? What can be done to change it?

Women clearly *are* under-represented. The percentage of women who make it onto the nation's opinion pages ranges from 12 to 17 percent at most national papers, as cited in recent articles.

The Tribune fits the trend. I did a quick count of male and female bylines on The Tribune's editorial pages in the past month. I counted editorials, columnists and cartoons — whatever content Tribune staff has control over. From a total of 82 opinion pieces, women's bylines were on about 12 percent of them.

But I don't think this a product of bias. At least, not completely.

As a copy editor, I know a little bit about how we pick columns. We ask: Is the column interesting? Is it well written? Does it balance another piece on the page? Does it fit in the space I have?

You'll notice "Is it by a woman?" wasn't on the list. I asked Editor David Kraemer if he seeks gender balance in the columns he selects (though he only does this on occasion; copy editors generally do the picking). He said it is a valid consideration, and after hearing last month's count, said we should try to run more women's columns.

But that's only going to work if we have women's columns available to run.

The percentage of syndicated female columnists has risen, but only slightly, since 1999 — from 23.7 percent to 24.4 percent, according to Editor & Publisher magazine. There are just far fewer women writing their opinions for print.

Zofia Smardz, an assistant editor for The Washington Post's opinion section, wrote that she has a much tougher time convincing women to write. She thinks there are "innate differences between men and women" that help explain why fewer women's voices are represented. She used this metaphor:

"Think of a man as carrying a quiverful of arrows. When he spies a target, he lets fly with the whole caboodle. Most of his arrows will

miss the bull's-eye, but one is likely to hit. And that's the one people will remember — and applaud. A woman, though, proceeds slowly and considers carefully. Only when she's pretty sure she has a perfect shot does she send off a single arrow. And she hits the mark! Amazing! But ... too bad. The guy's already walked off with the prize."

When one female professor was asked to write a column for The Post, she asked for more time, saying, "If I was going to stick my neck out in a national publication, I wanted to be sure that I did it right." Smardz said she had never heard a potential male contributor utter such words.

Smardz did say there are always exceptions. But I don't think I'm one of them.

I didn't exactly jump up and down when former Facets editor Frances Wilke asked me to write a regular column. In fact, convincing me took a fair amount of begging and a bit of bribery. (The bribe was great Indian food, but it was bribery, nonetheless.) I had two concerns: How writing a column would affect any non-opinion stories I wanted to write, and whether the topics I wanted to write about matched what Ames women wanted to read about.

If The Tribune had started a men's magazine and one of the male staffers had been asked to write, would he have had worried if anyone would want to read his columns? It's possible, but not likely.

When I've asked my husband for advice on columns, he generally cheers on the most forceful arguments I've made and suggests wording even more forceful. My first drafts are full of qualifiers like "I think" and "in my opinion." I often spend more time researching than writing, and sometimes force myself past the feeling that I don't know enough about the subject.

Are these tendencies based on gender? Socialization? My own quirky personality?

I don't know, and judging by all the theories put out in the last month, no one else has a sure answer either.

I do know women should speak up. Women can not only shape the debate by writing about topics that are important to them, but also shape how we debate. If women are more likely to research other's opinions and findings before they speak, well, that's not a bad thing. A lot of people are tired of the venom-spewing school of opinion writing, and if women can bring a more considered approach to the table, a number of readers might stop skipping past the op-ed pages in disgust.

So, ladies: Grab some caffeine. Take a deep breath. Write.

And if you're not ready for The New York Times yet, there's a space in Facets just waiting for you. ♦

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